



Hand delivered

Pastor Reverend Cristian Ionescu
Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church
4850 N. Bernard Street
Chicago, IL 60625

May 22, 2020

Dear Pastor Reverend Cristian Ionescu:

On May 15, 2020, I directed that you not hold gatherings at **4850 N. Bernard Street** until such time as the data and guidance from public health officials indicates that it is safe to do so. Contrary to the State's "Stay at Home" Order (Executive Order) and my directive, you held services on May 17, 2020 at **4850 N. Bernard Street**. You were reported to have gatherings far in excess of ten individuals allowed by the Executive Order. As a result, you were issued an Administrative Notice of Violation by the Chicago Police Department.

As you may know, here in Chicago, we have lost three faith leaders to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and many more congregants who have been linked to churches with clusters outbreaks. In February 2020, the CDC reported¹ that one COVID-19 positive individual experiencing mild respiratory symptoms, unknowingly spread COVID to 16 people, ages 5 to 86 years, after attending a church funeral and a birthday party. Three of those individuals tragically died from the disease.

On a national level, just this week, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) described a large outbreak of COVID19, including several deaths, among a church congregation in Arkansas.² The CDC reported that among 92 attendees at a rural Arkansas church over just a five-day period, from March 6–11, 35 (38%) developed laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, and three persons died. This occurred as a result of just two individuals (index cases) participating in church events several days *before* they developed symptoms of nonspecific respiratory symptoms and fever. This outbreak highlights the likelihood for widespread transmission of COVID-19 at group gatherings, even before any participants show symptoms. It further emphasizes the paramount

¹ "Community Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 at Two Family Gatherings — Chicago, Illinois, February–March 2020."

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6915e1.htm?s_cid=mm6915e1_w

² "High COVID-19 Attack Rate Among Attendees at Events at a Church — Arkansas, March 2020."

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6920e2.htm?s_cid=mm6920e2_w

importance of adhering to guidance from the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the CDC, including avoiding any gatherings of groups of more than 10 individuals.

As I previously provided, the Governor's Executive Order has the force of law and is enforceable by law enforcement agencies in Chicago and throughout the state. CDPH has the authority, pursuant to the Department of Public Health Act (20 ILCS 2305/1-1.1 et seq.), the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois (Department of Public Health Powers and Duties Law) (20 ILCS 2310/1 et seq.) and the Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 690), to order that a location be closed and made off limits to the public "to prevent the probable spread of a dangerously contagious or infectious disease... until such time as the condition can be corrected or the danger to the public health eliminated or reduced in such a manner that no substantial danger to the public's health any longer exists." 20 ILCS 2305/2(b). In addition, as the Health Commissioner, I have the power and duty "to cause all nuisances affecting the health of the public to be abated with all reasonable promptness," and general police powers "to correct, by whatever means are necessary, any health hazard that presents an immediate risk to the life or health of one or more citizens of the City of Chicago." *See* Chi. Muni. Code § 2-112-160 and § 2-112-080.

Please be advised, any continued operation of **4850 N. Bernard Street** in defiance of my directive and the Executive Order is hereby declared a public health nuisance. Pursuant to the Municipal Code of Chicago, I am authorized to seek to enjoin such nuisance or to cause the same to be summarily abated in such manner as I may direct pursuant to the applicable provisions of the Code. *See* Chi. Muni. Code § 7-28-020. Through this Notice, I am exercising my authority to order the abatement of the public health nuisance at **4850 N. Bernard Street** which may contribute to the continued spread of COVID19 by failing to comply with restrictions set out in the Executive Order. *See* Chi. Muni. Code § 7-28-010.

This **Notice to Abate** is being served upon you as the leader of your congregation. Given the heightened risk of spread of COVID19 in gatherings of 10 or more, you are hereby ordered to abate immediately. You are prohibited from having any in-person gatherings contrary to the Executive Order. You are required to cancel all gatherings contrary to the law. If you continue to host gatherings in violation of the Executive Order, the City of Chicago will take all necessary measures to abate the nuisance to ensure the safety of the City's residents. Please be further advised, pursuant to section 7-28-010 of the Chicago Municipal Code:

"If the person so notified shall neglects, refuses or otherwise fails to comply with any of the requirements of such order within the time specified in the notice required under this section, such person shall be fined not less than \$250.00 nor more than \$500.00 for each such offense. Each day that a violation continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense to which a separate fine shall apply."

* * * "In addition to any fine or other penalty provided by law, the person who created, continued or suffered the nuisance to exist shall be liable to the city for any and all costs and expenses incurred by the city in abating the nuisance, plus a penalty of up to three times the amount of the costs and expenses incurred by the city." Chi. Muni. Code § 7-28-010.

Gatherings held contrary to the Executive Order can result in the unintentional spread of the disease to some of our most vulnerable residents. I appeal to you as a leader in your community and remain hopeful that you will work with me for the health, safety, and welfare of all Chicagoans. If you continue to operate in defiance of the Executive Order, the City will pursue all available legal remedies, including those outlined above. Any future gatherings conducted contrary to the Order will be considered a failure to abate and the City will take steps necessary to abate, including Summary Abatement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Arwady, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allison Arwady, MD
Commissioner
Chicago Department of Public Health